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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE 0692  
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA IMMEDIATE 0646  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PESHAWAR 000496

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/29/2018

TAGS: [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: BOUCHER MEETS NORTHWEST FRONTIER GOVERNOR GHANI IN PESHAWAR

CLASSIFIED BY: Lynne Tracy, Principal Officer, Peshawar,  
Department of State.

REASON: 1.4 (a), (b), (d)

Summary

11. (C) Northwest Frontier Province Governor Owais Ghani told Assistant Secretary Richard A. Boucher during an October 20 visit to his office in Peshawar that the situation in the Federally Administered Tribal Area had "turned around" largely due to activation of public opinion. The public sees the government as the "lesser evil" and expects development. Ghani will lead the Pakistan delegation to the October 27-28 grand Jirga. Ghani said the Lashkars have seen some recent success but they fatigue quickly. The local taliban were not part of the discussion in the recent Kurram peace deal which threatens its durability. Ghani said that North Waziristan is quiet but there were several factions working to gain the upper hand in the Mehsud tribe. End summary.

SITUATION HAS TURNED AROUND?

12. (C) Ghani said during an October 20 meeting with Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs Richard Boucher in Peshawar that the situation in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas had "turned around" in part due to the eight month strategy to have the people and the tribes take action. He explained that "once you have broad popular support then things become easier," but this concept still needed to be sold to the settled areas and much of the Tribal Areas also. He claimed that the threat to Peshawar had been pushed back, he had encouraged in-fighting amongst the miscreants and that he predicted significant improvement in the security situation in the next six to nine months.

JIRGA BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND AFGANISTAN

13. (C) Ghani said that he would lead the Pakistan delegation at the joint mini-jirga, October 27-28. He said the U.S. must be there but that the U.S. and NATO are not seen as neutral and for that purpose the Saudis could play a role behind the scenes. Boucher reinforced the need for the two sides to discuss denial

of safe havens to al Qaeda and local militants while bringing development to tribal communities along the border. Ghani said that he saw the fundamentals as an abandonment of violence, militants either killed or laying down their arms, and an acceptance of the government. Ghani concluded by asking that the "U.S. not weaken us versus Afghanistan so we can help when it is time."

#### BAJAUR ACTION and ORAKZAI AGENCY

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14. (C) Ghani explained that while the timing of operations was not always the government's, they had let them unfold, and according to Frontier Corps "conservative estimates" had killed 1,800 miscreants while army intelligence estimates listed 2,000 of the enemy killed in the Bajaur operation thus far. He said that fighters coming across the Afghanistan border into Pakistan were 200 the first week of the fighting followed by a group of 400 and another 100 the week of October 13. Previously they had seen fighters entering from Afghanistan two or three at a time. Ghani claimed that these most recent crossing were made in pick-up trucks and had been seen by his contacts. Concerning the situation in Orakzai, Ghani expected that the lashkar would "do the main job".

#### ACTIVATION OF PUBLIC OPINION

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15. (C) Ghani stated that every action that he has taken supported his overall strategy of having the populace and the tribes take action against the miscreants. He asserted that this was why in one area there would be military action while in another dialogue. Each time it was what was needed to garner public support. He argued that the public will "only come out" against the local taliban when the government shows resolve. He

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added that while the malik tribal leader system had been hurt as a result of targeted killing it was still functionally strong as the government appointed maliks who achieved a certain level of respect within their tribe. He maintained that when the tribes decide that it is not profitable to have the local taliban in their areas they will "kick them out."

#### WHY THE TRIBES WOULD BE ON THE GOVERNMENT SIDE?

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16. (C) Assistant Secretary Boucher asked why the tribes would be on the government's side. Ghani responded that the tribes had begun to see the government as the lesser of the evils and they expected the government to come in a "major way" with development. He added that he had made rewarding good behavior of the tribes a policy and cited the change in location of a planned university to Khar, Bajaur agency as an example of rewarding areas that resist the local taliban. Other development activities that he envisioned were: small dams, reclamation of land, forestry projects including fruit trees and electrical schemes.

#### LASHKARS AND LEVYS

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17. (C) Ghani stated the lashkars are having some success and is proud that although five months ago there were no tribal lashkars resisting the local taliban, now there are many. He cautioned however that the lashkars are a force that "fatigues quickly" as they form based on the call of the tribal elders for a specific purpose with no pay or direct government support and disperse to resume their regular professions once the action is completed. Ghani said he plans to take the best of the youth from the lashkar forces and create additional levys, perhaps as many as 15,000. He explained that this additional force would be commanded by ex-army officers or sergeant majors. The additional levies would be assigned by agency with vacancies allotted by the "grandfather system" that apportions positions

by tribal shares. He complained that in his recent meeting with Prime Minister Gilani he expected an indication of when the money would come for the additional levys but thus far he had "received nothing".

#### KURRAM AND THE SUNNI-SHIA PROBLEM

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18. (C) Governor Ghani addressed the recent peace deal between the Shia and Sunni groups in Kurram. He stated that the local taliban were not parties to the discussion and thus the peace would likely be short lived. He recounted a Shia threat to go to NATO forces to ask them to come in to the Pakistan agency of Kurram should the Government of Pakistan fail to act on their behalf. Ghani said that in certain cases it was best to let the youth fight and then "tire of it" which would lead to negotiations similar to the recent agreement in Kurram.

#### NORTH/SOUTH WAZIRISTAN, BAITULLAH MESHUD AND HAQQANI

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19. (C) Responding to Assistant Secretary Boucher's query as to who was in charge of the Mehsud tribe of South Waziristan, Ghani explained that Baitullah Meshud was not dead but is a diabetic, being treated by doctors daily, is on dialysis and there perhaps was a "war of succession" within the Mehsud tribe that the governor would try to influence. He said that South Waziristan is quiet but there were several factions working to gain the upper hand in the Mehsud tribe. Governor Ghani added that he wants to tie down the tribes in North and South Waziristan based on tradition as there was no better system available for use in those two agencies. Responding to Boucher's statement that Mehsud was still training suicide bombers, Ghani said that tribal agreements bind both sides of the border.

110. (U) This cable has been cleared with Assistant Secretary

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Boucher.  
TRACY